



CONFIDENTIAL

TO: O'DELL HENDERSON, DIRECTOR
LABOR MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

FROM: DEITRA MULLINS, COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATOR
COMPLIANCE AND INVESTIGATIONS *DM*

SUBJECT: DUAN WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL, AND [REDACTED]
AND STUDENTS, HARTSTERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DATE: MARCH 8, 2018

Allegations: On February 8, 2018, the office of Compliance and Investigations received a request for an investigation from Paige Hartstern, assistant superintendent. Per the request, it is alleged that Duan Wright, principal, picked up [REDACTED] student, and threw him over his shoulder and carried him. He has stated to students "You better tell the truth or I will close the door and handle things my way."

Findings: On February 28, 2018, an interview was conducted with English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, Tammy Crowder (Attachment A). Ms. Crowder stated that at the beginning of the school year she was standing in the front hallway of the school when [REDACTED] came in for his first day of school. Ms. Crowder stated that being [REDACTED] first day, it was obvious that he did not want to be there. Ms. Crowder stated that when he came in, he was crying, fell to the floor, and did not want to stand up and walk to class. Ms. Crowder stated that Mr. Wright was standing nearby and walked over to [REDACTED] and asked what was wrong. When Mr. Wright realized that [REDACTED] was just scared and not wanting to go to class, he instructed [REDACTED] to go with him. Ms. Crowder stated that Mr. Wright then bent down, lifted [REDACTED] up off the floor, threw him over one of his shoulders, and carried him to his classroom.

Ms. Crowder stated [REDACTED] was not yelling, but she could tell he was confused about what was going on, because he is an ESL student, and cannot speak English or understand anything being said around him. Ms. Crowder stated that

she could only assume that [REDACTED] was also a little embarrassed by the fact that he was seen being carried into his classroom by a man he had never met before.

Ms. Crowder stated she was also present in the office when Mr. Wright was verbally abrasive and yelled at student [REDACTED]. According to Ms. Crowder, [REDACTED] had been taken to the office because he had been accused of stealing something and Mr. Wright wanted to speak with him. Ms. Crowder stated she was in the office with [REDACTED] and when Mr. Wright began to speak with him, [REDACTED] got quiet and refused to answer questions. According to Ms. Crowder that made Mr. Wright upset, he raised his voice, and told [REDACTED] that if he did not start telling the truth he was going to close the door and handle things his way. When asked by this investigator what Mr. Wright might have meant by the comments, she said she did not know. Ms. Crowder stated she has never been in his office when he actually closed the door. Ms. Crowder stated it probably meant that he was going to continue yelling, and then make [REDACTED] sit on the floor and serve a time-out. Ms. Crowder stated that she has seen students sitting on the floor facing the wall in Mr. Wright's office for long periods, per Mr. Wright's directive.

On February 26, 2018, an interview was conducted with [REDACTED] Kimberly Pierce, bilingual associate instructor II, was present during the interview.

During the interview, [REDACTED] stated he knows Mr. Wright and may see him from time-to-time in the hallways. [REDACTED] stated he likes Mr. Wright and could not recall any incident where Mr. Wright had picked him up and placed him over his shoulders. When asked by this investigator if Mr. Wright had ever threatened to close the door and handle things his way, he shrugged his shoulders as if to say he did not know, and then shook his head, "no."

On March 6, 2018, an interview was conducted with [REDACTED] Ms. Pierce was present during portions of the interview.

During the interview with [REDACTED] he stated that Mr. Wright has loudly threatening to close his door when speaking with him, but did not make the comment that he was "gonna handle things his way." [REDACTED] stated that Mr. Wright was upset with him for something, threatened to close the door, and then raised his voice. [REDACTED] stated that Mr. Wright made him sit on the floor, facing the wall with his legs crossed, as a form of punishment. [REDACTED] stated he did not recall how long he was asked to sit there.

On February 26, 2018, this investigator spoke with Ms. Pierce.

Ms. Pierce stated she works one-on-one with both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] often and has never observed or heard Mr. Wright threatening them, threatening to close the door, or picking them up.

On February 26, 2018, an interview was conducted with Mr. Wright. Warren Shelton, Jefferson County Association of School Administrators (JCASA), was present during the interview.

During the interview, Mr. Wright denied the allegations, stating that he could not think of any interaction with [REDACTED] other than saying, "good morning," and has never threatened a student by saying he was going to close his door and handle things his way. Mr. Wright stated he is very professional and ethical in how he conducts business with students and staff.

On March 7, 2018, this investigator spoke with [REDACTED], student, at Blake Elementary School. [REDACTED] was a student at Hartstern Elementary School three years ago.

During the interview, [REDACTED] stated that he recalled being in trouble and having to go to the office, but could not recall any incident where Mr. Wright had threatened to close the door when he spoke with him. [REDACTED] stated he could recall that when he spoke with Mr. Wright, that Mr. Wright was upset.

Conclusion:

Per interviews conducted and statements obtained, it is unsubstantiated that Mr. Wright picked up [REDACTED] threw him over his shoulder and carried him. The allegation is unsubstantiated per [REDACTED] who could not recall any incident where Mr. Wright had picked him up.

The allegation stating that Mr. Wright has stated, "You better tell the truth or I will close the door and handle things my way" is also unsubstantiated as stated. However, it was found and substantiated, that Mr. Wright has threatened to close the door when he speaks to students. This finding is based on interviews conducted and the statements obtained.

DM:jlb

c Paige Hartstern

ATTACHMENT A

Several times since 2015, I witnessed Mr. Wright participating in the following interactions.

To the best of my recollection the following things occurred:

On or about August 18, 2017 a new ESL student was brought in by his Uncle to Hartstern. The student's name was [REDACTED] and he was very intimidated as new ESL student's often are upon entering a school as a first grader. I was in the front hallway speaking with [REDACTED] and his Uncle to encourage him that our school is safe and he would enjoy making friends. Mr. Wright came out, joined the conversation, and told the Uncle to go on and leave that we could handle it from here.

As soon as the Uncle drove away [REDACTED] continued to cry harder and Mr. Wright told him to stand up and go to class but he sat and cried. Mr. Wright pulled him to a standing position and tried to get him to walk to class and when [REDACTED] refused, Mr. Wright picked him up over his shoulder, carried him to his 1st grade classroom (Ms. Cole), sat him in his seat, and said, in a harsh and angry tone, something like 'dry it up, that's not how we do it at Hartstern'. The students was obviously scared and continued to cry. I left the room to get my other ESL students and am not sure how the rest of the day went. I recall Mrs. Cole and Ms. McDonald were in the room at the time.

On several occasions, I witnessed Mr. Wright using a harsh, loud tone with students who were taken to the office for breaking school rules.

Two specific incidents I remember were that I took [REDACTED] to the office (for Ms. Philpott, a 1st grade teacher) because he said that he was in a car wreck and did not go to the hospital. Mr. Wright asked him if he was telling the truth and the questioning escalated. Mr. Wright was getting angry that [REDACTED] was changing his story and Mr. Wright said something to the effect that he could close the door and get the truth "his way." The whole conversation seemed intimidating. Later Ms. Philpott came in and Mr. Wright continued to raise his voice with [REDACTED] and told him "he was the Captain of the boat now." ([REDACTED] is a Spanish speaker) In addition, some other insensitive comments. I cannot remember his exact words. The tone was harsh and intimidating and I remember the comments felt threatening towards [REDACTED] Ms. Philpott and I discussed the incident later and we both felt uncomfortable and unsure how to process what we had witnessed.

Another incident that happened in 2016 was when an ESL student, [REDACTED] had stolen something from his teacher and Mr. Wright was trying to get him to tell the truth. Mr. Wright repeated what he often does with students by telling him that he could close the door and get the truth out of him his way. I believe that his teacher was Mrs. Pierce.

There is frequently yelling coming from Mr. Wright's office with no other adults in the room.

Finally, it is common for me to walk into Mr. Wright's office and for him to have students in the emergency drill position on the floor for long periods. He has said things to me like "Just ignore them they are practicing for a drill for a while." This is common procedure for students who are sent to his office and has been witnessed by other teachers including Ms. Rutledge, Mrs. Pierce, Ms. Philpott, Ms. Boyer, the office staff (including Ms. Proffitt) and Ms. Turner. I stopped taking my students to his office last year after he threatened a student and I choose to handle all discipline myself.

Tammy Crowder

Mullins, Deitra L

From: Crowder, Tammy
Sent: Wednesday, March 7, 2018 9:06 PM
To: Mullins, Deitra L
Subject: Crowder- Hartstern Statement
Attachments: This is a statement about several instances that happened at Hartstern Elementary school.docx

Importance: High

I am attaching my statement.